

# Join M•A•Y Club

MONTANA ANGLING YOUTH

- Anyone preschool through elementary can join!
- No meetings to attend, just get great stuff by mail!
- Receive fun newsletters at your home filled with information, tips, & games!
- Get cool fishing tackle and outdoor items you can use right away!
- Learn about fishing and the water environment!
- Write us and share your fishing tips, fishing photos, and fish stories with kids around Montana. (Please write and draw **in pen or in VERY DARK pencil**.)

Mail or drop off your letters or registration to:

**M•A•Y Club**

MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
490 North Meridian Road  
Kalispell, Montana 59901

**KIDS:**  
If you are getting this newsletter, you are already a member, so share this registration form with a friend who might want to join!

## Registration Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

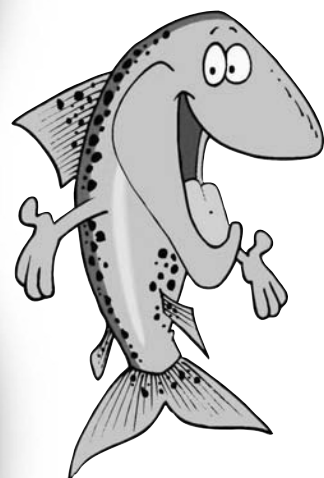
Town \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

**M•A•Y Club**  
**NEWSLETTER**

is published by



**Montana Fish,  
Wildlife & Parks**



**M•A•Y Club**

490 North Meridian Road  
Kalispell, Montana 59901-3854

(Or current resident)

## Pumpkinseed

*continued from front*

Spring is one of the best times to catch pumpkinseeds, although they can be caught all year long. In the spring as the shallow water is warmed by the sun, pumpkinseeds clear out an area and build a nest on the bottom. The eggs are laid in the nest, and the adult pumpkinseeds stay nearby guarding the eggs from predators.

Like most other sunfish, pumpkinseeds love to eat worms, and a small piece of a worm or nightcrawler is a great bait. Use a small hook, a little weight and tiny bobber, and you can catch all the pumpkinseeds you want. And don't forget to pay attention and enjoy the color of the fish you catch. Even though it has a name that might be a little strange, a pumpkinseed is a beautiful fish.

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# M•A•Y Club

MONTANA ANGLING YOUTH

Fall 2006



You are now  
one of **4,000**  
**M•A•Y Club**  
Members!!

## May Club Feature Fish - Pumpkinseed

Sometimes fish names can tell you a lot about a fish. A golden trout can be a beautiful golden color. A paddlefish has a heck of a big paddle for a nose. And a slimy sculpin might just be a little slimy if you pick it up.

But what about the pumpkinseed? Is it a fish, or is it a vegetable? With a name like that, it's hard to tell.

Pumpkinseeds are members of the sunfish family. They have been introduced into Montana from lakes

in the eastern part of the United States, so they are not native to Montana. But they have become very popular here. The Flathead Valley of Northwest Montana is probably the best place to find them, although they are found in other parts of the state, especially the southeast.

As a member of the sunfish family, pumpkinseeds are closely related to bluegills and green sunfish, and look very much like them. They have a body that is shaped like a small plate, flat and mostly round. People who study fish think pumpkinseeds are shaped that way because it allows them to tip their mouth up or down very quickly to find their food. People who like to catch pumpkinseeds are glad their bodies are

shaped that way because it makes a pumpkinseed hard to reel in when they are hooked.

Although Montana has many colorful fish, the pumpkinseed is one of the brightest. With wavy blue lines on their cheeks, a yellowish-orange belly, and a flap on

their gills colored bright red and orange, some pumpkinseeds look

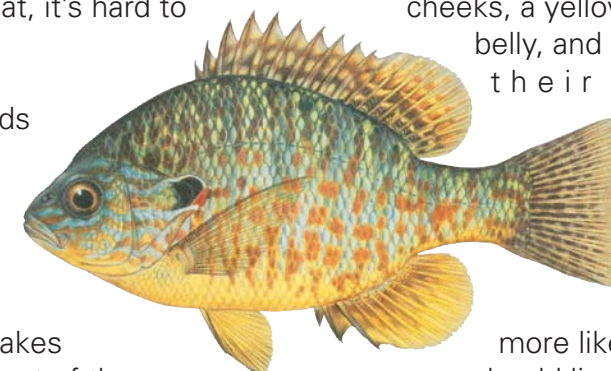
more like fish that should live on a tropical reef in a warm ocean than in a cold Montana lake.

Most pumpkinseeds are not very big, only five or six inches long. If you are lucky enough to catch a pumpkinseed over eight inches long you might want to take a picture of it. You'll read a story in this issue of the M•A•Y Club about a boy in Montana who caught the biggest pumpkinseed ever recorded in the state of Montana. It was almost 10 inches long, and weighed almost one pound.

*continued on back*

## Look Here!

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- PAGE 2 Fall Spawners
- PAGE 3 Take a Hike...  
...to a Mountain Lake, that is
- PAGE 4 Join the Club



**Montana Fish,  
Wildlife & Parks**

# Hooked ON FISHING



## Youngster catches Montana record sunfish

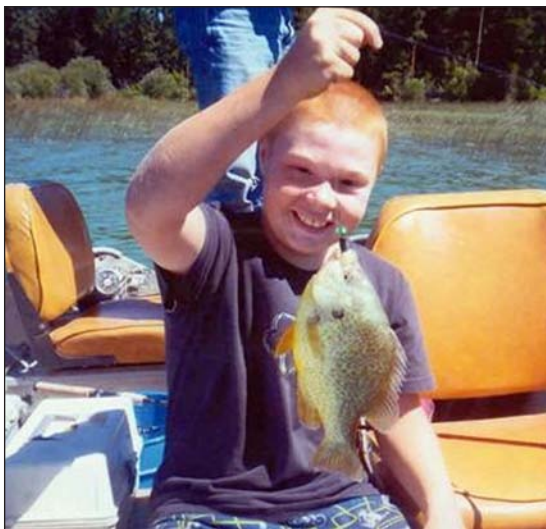
By MARK HENCKEL

Monster fish don't have to be big. It all depends on the species and how big they can grow.

Take the case of 10-year-old Nathan Bache, of Libby, who caught a 9.5-inch, 0.96-pound pumpkinseed sunfish on Upper Thompson Lake in northwestern Montana on July 30.

Bache caught it on a green-headed jig while fishing in a boat with his parents and it is now the new Montana

state record for the species by a whopping one-one-hundredth-of-a-pound.



Bache was fishing for bass, according to Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks information officer John Fraley, at Kalispell. "I casted over by some weeds and the fish bit hard," Bache said. "It fought like a two-pound bass. I never saw a sunfish that big."

Fraley notes that the pumpkinseed sunfish is one of three sunfish species in Montana, along with the bluegill and green sunfish.

## Outdoors just for kids: Fall spawners important part of state's fisheries

By MARK HENCKEL

Most fish species spawn in the spring - rainbow trout, cutthroat trout, walleyes, bass and northern pike, to name just a few. But there are some species in Montana that are fall spawners.

It's hard to imagine why nature would let these fish survive over time while spawning in fall - especially in this part of the world where winter can be so severe.

For spring spawners, eggs are deposited when length of day and water temperatures hit a certain point. Waters are warming under the spring and summer sun. And with those warming waters, fish eggs incubate quickly and in a few weeks are hatched out into fry.

For fall spawners, the eggs will nestle amid the gravel or fall on the hard lake bottom and sit there all through

the winter months. They'll incubate slowly in the frigid water temperatures. And they won't hatch out until spring, usually just as the spring spawners are starting to deposit their eggs.

For river species like mountain whitefish, brook trout and brown trout, that means the eggs will have to survive winter's ice, ice

*continued on page 3*

# M·A·Y Club

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## There's still time to fish high mountain lakes

Fall may be the very best time to fish Montana's high mountain lakes. The cooling water temperatures trigger the appetites of these mountain trout. You can sometimes even hit a lake while a "feeding frenzy" is going on. This is the time of year that trout slurp up winged ants by the dozens when these ants are blown into the water. Grasshoppers are a big food item as well.

If you want to fish a high mountain lake, check on fish stocking records. Many lakes at high elevations depend on fish stocking because there are no spawning areas where the fish can reproduce. All Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks offices can supply you with a list of lakes that are

stocked. Some lakes do support natural reproduction.

Flyfishing is a great way to catch fish at mountain lakes. You can also cast flies with

a bobber and spinning outfit. Lures work well most of the time. And one of the best ways to catch high mountain trout is casting a live grasshopper on a small hook. Weight the 'hopper with a small splitshot and suspend it about 3 feet below your bobber. Then get ready for action!

Don't forget to try eating some of the trout you catch. Trout in these high lakes usually have pink or reddish meat and offer a great taste treat.

Fall fishing in high mountain lakes can be spectacular when you hit it right. Even if the fish aren't biting that well, the scenery and hike are worth the trip.



## Fall spawners *continued from page 2*

jams, channel scouring and early runoff before they hatch.

For reservoir species like lake trout and cisco, the eggs have

to survive water levels that typically drop, leaving the chance for eggs to become high and dry before spring runoff begins raising water levels again.

But, for whatever reason, these fish species have survived as fall spawners. And they make up an important part of the fisheries that populate our waters today.